

The Faith of David

Cheryl glanced at the video monitor on the nightstand. She was exhausted. She had just changed her 87-year-old mother's adult diaper.

Cheryl laid still, listening to the hum of the oxygen concentrator, which was connected to her mother's Bi-Pap machine. The healthcare worker would be at the house at 9 A.M. to help with the care of Mrs. Moore and would leave at 4 P.M.

"It's good you retired two years ago," her friend Kayla had said. "Caregiving is hard work, but I know you can do it. You love your mom, and you're a strong woman."

Cheryl certainly loved her mother. But she could feel some weakening—not in her resolve to help her mother, but in her perseverance and strength. She felt overwhelmed. How long could she continue to do this?

"I don't know what I am doing," Cheryl had confided in Kayla.

"That's not true," Kayla had responded. "You have been taking care of your mom for the last 10 years."

"Lord, I need your strength to get through this," Cheryl prayed, letting her head sink further into the pillow. "Thank You for today. Give us grace to get through tonight, because I know You will have new mercies in the morning. I'm leaning and depending on You, Lord, because I know it will be Your power that carries both of us through! In Jesus' name, amen."

1. *Why is it easy for us to see and hear only the strength of our opposition?*

2. *What was David's secret to having faith in God's strength?*

3. *How can we focus on the strength of God in our daily lives?*

Goliath's Challenge

1 Samuel 17:31-33, KJV

31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him.

32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

1 Samuel 17:31-33, NIV

³¹What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³²David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

³³Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

In this showdown between King Saul's army and the Philistines, Israel's enemy kept challenging their opponents to a champions' duel. The Philistine's champion was Goliath, who stood head and shoulders above his comrades and was easily able to wield hundreds of pounds of armor. He hurled insults for 40 days against Saul, his men, and the God of Israel. Intimidated by Goliath, no one stepped forward to challenge him (vss. 1-30).

A young man on Israel's side, who was not in the army but visiting his brothers, heard the taunts. He complained to the commanding officers that something had to be done to shut his enemy down. When Saul heard about this brave young man and called for him, he was disappointed. Instead of a seasoned warrior, he saw a shepherd boy, whose "Achilles heel" would be his inexperience in battle.

- 4.** *What did David offer to do for Saul?*
- 5.** *Why did Saul initially say no to David's request?*
- 6.** *What did Saul see as David's "Achilles' heel"?*

David's Confidence in God

1 Samuel 17:34-37, KJV

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

1 Samuel 17:34-37, NIV

³⁴But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

David answered the king's objections by presenting him with a resume. He started with sheep. Part of David's job as a shepherd was, of course, to protect the sheep from hungry predators, such as wolves, lions, and bears.

From this experience, David took a leap of faith. He understood that God had given him the ability and courage to do hand-to-hand combat with a relentless, hungry animal with sharp fangs. If God was willing to do this, David reasoned, He would also give him what he needed

to defeat an enemy threatening God's flock. David had done this with lions and bears, both large and intimidating animals. Surely David would be able to dispatch this "uncircumcised" giant. To refer to an enemy as "uncircumcised" meant that he was not part of the covenant people of God and had no interest in obeying the God of Israel—much less speaking of Him with the respect and devotion He deserved.

Seeing David's bravery and determination, King Saul gave him permission to face the enemy of Israel.

7. *Why did David have confidence in his ability to defeat the giant?*

8. *How had David seen God deliver him in the past?*

9. *Why did Saul give up on trying to convince David not to face the giant?*

David Slays the Giant

1 Samuel 17:45, 48-50, KJV

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead,

1 Samuel 17:45, 48-50, NIV

⁴⁵David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."

⁴⁸As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

⁴⁹Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone

that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

⁵⁰So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

In response to the giant's mocking, David remained steadfast and let his enemy know who was about to execute him. David would take this Philistine champion's life; but in the end, it would be the living God of Israel who would end his time on Earth. Goliath was trusting in his weapons, but David's confidence was in the Lord. The practice and expression of David's faith was cumulative—he was building from his past experience to go to a place, empowered by God, where he had not been before.

As Goliath came in for the attack, the young man met the challenge and began moving toward his adversary. This may have confused Goliath, who had a great deal of experience of enemy soldiers running away from him. The giant may have recognized that David had weaponized a sling, but thought little of it. David was able to release his first rock toward Goliath and nailed him right in the forehead, causing him to lose consciousness immediately. The average velocity of a rock release from a sling was over 100 mph! David then took his enemy's sword and cut off the predator's head.

David's increasing faith in God had paid off.

10. *How did David challenge the giant's belief that he was superior in war to the young man?*

11. *How did David prepare to fell the giant?*

12. *What was the final surprising result of the battle?*

His Strength in Our Weakness

In the story of David, his reliance on God stands out. He relied fully on God's strength and power. David didn't let his youth or lack of armor and weapons stop him. Our weakness is never God's weakness. His strength can carry us through even the most impossible-looking situations. David used what he had at hand and trusted that God would use it for His glory. That is, we, like David, are weak that we might be a vessel, a "treasure in jars of clay" (2 Cor. 4:7), to display God's strength and power to deliver those who call on Him.

We see David's dependence on God in his thoughts, words, and actions. More than once in this scene he refers to the living Lord, the God of Israel. His trust and confidence in God's strength began during his shepherding experience, as he delivered sheep from the mouths of their enemies.

David had many days and nights to practice with his slingshot and also to grow in relationship with God. Based on his experiences, he made a connection that God would help him defeat this enemy of the Israelites. He told anyone who would listen (and even those who wouldn't!) that God would win the battle. He had complete confidence in the Lord's strength and ability to defeat Goliath. David's goal was not only victory, but that God would be glorified.

13. *How can we remain steadfast in the face of opposition?*

14. *How does considering ourselves weak help us rely more on God's strength?*

15. *Describe a time in your life when God's strength carried you through.*

16. *What should be our ultimate goal and reason to trust in God?*

In God's Strength

David placed his faith in God's strength, not his own. He was not matched physically for Goliath—but God was. When we face the Goliaths in our lives, we need to remember that God is bigger than any problem we have. He will give us the strength, through the Holy Spirit, to forge ahead in faith to whatever He wants us to do, whatever Goliath that He wants us to overcome.

► *How has what you have learned about God's strength affected your faith? How can you put what you have learned into action in your faith-life?*

KEY VERSE

David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. —1 Samuel 17:37a, KJV

"The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

—1 Samuel 17:37a, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of December 11 through December 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Genesis 38:6-11, 13-18, 24-26—Tamar's Risk-taking Faith.
- Tue.** Joshua 2:1-6, 8-16—Rahab's Faith.
- Wed.** James 5:1-11—Patient Faith.
- Thu.** 1 Timothy 1:12-17—God's Grace Overflowed.
- Fri.** 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26—12:1, 4-7a, 15-16, 24—Bathsheba's Challenged Faith.
- Sat.** Psalm 9:1-14—God, the Stronghold for the Oppressed.
- Sun.** Matthew 1:1-17—A Family Tree Characterized by Faith.